A SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS OF THE CORRELATES OF FOOD INSECURITY SUSCEPTIBILITY AND SUPPORT IN AN URBAN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN LIMA, PERU [1]


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During my time in Peru as a Fogarty Global Health Scholar I will be conducting research for my dissertation project. I will explore how the social networks of mothers living in an informal settlement in northern Lima affects household food insecurity and health. While food insecurity is largely associated with poverty, income does not tell the entire story of which households are food insecure and which are not. Research shows that even small differences in support from family and friends can impact health in marginalized communities. In addition, in Peru and other low-and-middle-income countries, rapid urbanization, poor mental health, and growing obesity are co-occurring. This mixed-methods project will use social network analysis and the collection of biomarkers to elucidate potential behavioral and biological pathways between these phenomena. This project has three aims:

1. Characterize women's lived experience with shocks leading to uncertain access to food and describe strategies used for coping with insecurity
2. Describe women's social networks, including sociodemographic and other characteristics of people from whom women receive and to whom women give social support
3. Assess the ways in which social networks are associated with food insecurity and health

In addition to disseminating the theoretical and applied significance of this research through publication in peer-reviewed journals, I will also share ethnographically-informed recommendations on food security and nutrition policy and programs to government and non-profit institutions.